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ACCO USA goes interactive

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Abstract:

ACCO USA, office supplies manufacturer and distributor, has an innovative new way to sell its products: an **on-line** interactive **catalog** called Solutions. ACCO sells to businesses, but it wanted to become more focused on consumers. The interactive catalog, produced by advertising agency Einstein and Sandom Inc., was designed to accomplish that objective. Customers can use the interactive catalog to request more product information on-line or select products and generate an order-form printout. By inserting the disk into a PC, users can access a simple menu and options for sub-menus that describe ACCO USA's various product categories. The program provides graphics and text about the products. Since launching Solutions, the company has spent a great deal of time educating its salespersons, dealers, and customers on the program.

Full Text:

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WHEELING, IL--Office supplies manufacturer and distributor ACCO USA has an innovative new way to sell products: an **on-line** interactive **catalog** titled Solutions.

Although ACCO sells to businesses, it wanted to become more consumer-focused. "We were looking for an

interesting and unique way to go to market with our new products," says ACCO USA's consumer marketing manager, Marv Rosenfeldt. The interactive catalog, produced for ACCO by New York-based interactive advertising agency Einstein and Sandom Inc., fit the bill.

Using the interactive catalog, customers can request more product information on-line or select products and generate an order-form printout (the catalog is not yet set up with an on-line order system). When the disk is inserted into a PC, users can access a simple menu and options for sub-menus describing ACCO USA's various product categories. The program delivers animated graphics and text about the firm's products. "It's like a product demonstration without having the product in hand," Rosenfeldt says.

The Solutions diskette was first introduced to ACCO USA's national sales force last July; a final master version was produced in October for dealers and customers. Instead of being mailed to businesses like a paper catalog, the diskettes will be distributed through ACCO's dealers and stores by request only.

Solutions works with any IBM PC or compatible computer with graphics capability. For monochrome PCs without graphics capabilities, the program automatically runs a text-based "Shadow" version specifically designed for low-end PCs. An update program allows dealers or stores to customize their own interactive presentation. The Solutions program can also be installed in a company's computer network if it's compatible with ACCO's software.

Since Solutions' launch, Rosenfeldt says the company has spent a lot of time educating its salespeople, dealers and customers on the program. Although sales results from the electronic catalog were unavailable at press time, Rosenfeldt says user response has been favorable, particularly from computer-oriented customers. And, he adds, because of its unique format, Solutions is getting a lot more attention than traditional direct mail or catalogs.

Rosenfeldt says many ACCO clients that have used the interactive catalog seem to feel that "this is the way a lot of information will be distributed in the future." He compares the interactive catalog concept to a videolog in audio and visual capabilities. But while videologs never took off—primarily because many offices have limited access to video equipment—most businesses do have access to PCs. As interactive marketing becomes more mainstream, Rosenfeldt says, "I see catalogers picking up on this format."

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